

## **SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP**

**THURSDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2022**

Present: Councillor P J Owen, Chair

Councillors: M Hannah  
S Easom  
J C Goold  
I L Tyler

### 12 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### 13 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2022 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### 14 **CUSTOMER SERVICES REPORT**

Members of the Working Group was presented with the draft report for Telephone Answering and Customer Services. The report covered the background information and how the investigation focussed on customer services standards across the workforce, especially the back office calls and answerphone greetings. Consideration was given to hunt group calls, customer services contingencies and the approach that were being developed by the Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services to manage demand at peak times. A separate scrutiny topic of the Service Provided by the Duty Planning Team and Acknowledgment of Calls was to be recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider a further review of the subject.

Discussions ensued with the recommendations from the review to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Additional information was to be provided to the first recommendation to ensure staffing levels were maintained and recruitment and retention of staff was addressed, including market supplements and temporary solutions of using internal staff to back fill posts. Concern was raised from the Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services that removing the phone message reminding customers of the possibility of resolving issues by visiting the Council website would increase the calls coming into Customer Services and this would impact the service further. In line with the Council's ICT and Digital Strategy the message should remain to signpost customers and to support the strategy. As a compromise the length, timing, and wording of the message would be reviewed and updated regularly. A suggestion that on a quarterly basis an updated telephone list of Senior Officers be circulated to all Members.

**Recommend to Overview and Scrutiny Committee that:**

- 1. Staffing contingency arrangements be considered for the Contact Centre during peak times in order for residents' calls to be answered and to look at the Market Supplements Policy to address staffing issues.**
- 2 Key Performance Indicators be introduced in relation to departmental call answering data to monitor performance and provide feedback.**
- 3. The answerphone greeting should be standardised across the Authority and be conducted by the Individual Officer. For all Officers to follow a set process of answering calls across the Authority. Officers should only use answerphone messages if they are away for no more than 24 hours and messages should be replies to the following working day. If Officers are to be away for longer, the call would enter a hunt group to be answered by a colleague. This should be included in the Customer Services Strategy.**
- 4. The phone message that reminds customers of the possibility of resolving issues by visiting the Council's website to be reviewed, the length of the message reduced and repetition of the message reduced.**
- 5. That a scrutiny topic be recommended to the work programme for Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Service Provided by the Duty Planning team and Acknowledgment of calls.**